

11642.9

AN
E L E G Y

BY A S O N,

Darius (Sec.)



k

LOSS OF A MOTHER.



A N
E L E G Y
B Y A S O N,
ON THE
LOSS OF A M O T H E R:

WRITTEN IN A CHURCH-YARD ON HIS BIRTH-DAY.

W I T H
AN INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE
O N
S E L F I S H N E S S I N S O R R O W.

----- HERE I AND SORROW SIT,
HERE IS MY THRONE, BID KINGS COME BOW TO IT.

SHAKESPEARE.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXXII.



INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

I N

Sth O R R O W.

THAT there is a degree of Selfishness in all human affections, is an indisputable truth:—and in proportion as they make us more or less happy, less easy and content, so they disturb that harmony of the soul, which nothing but the stern virtue of a Socrates, a Stilpo, a Seneca, and a Brutus, are said to have possessed. True philosophy is undoubtedly the consummation of virtue; but whether such virtue ever did subdue the passions, and enable man to look down on all the accidents of fortune without emotion, we have nothing but tradition to prove; which (if true) the amount is, that either the passions were trifling, or the feelings on which they played were callous and untender. Selfishness, whatever may be thought to the contrary on a superficial enquiry, must and will prevail in all human transactions; for where self is destitute of gratification, it has no motive either to forward the ease and happiness of others, or to pursue its own; consequently its inaction becomes indifference, and society loses all its comforts. Where, therefore, there is no selfishness, the passions have nothing on which to operate; and all the affections are little more than want of sensibility; if not intelligence, which renders the human being like unto a stock or a stone; and unamiable, if not injurious, in

b

that

that society to which he was born. In our love of others is included a portion of love of ourselves, which promotes it; and habit will, in spite of every thing, steal on our affections, so as to draw them into fondness, pity and compassion for those with whom we associate.

This is human nature, and no consummation of virtue is known beyond that of a patient resignation and submission to the ways of Providence, which will ever leave us more or less at the mercy of our feelings, accordingly as self has been more or less gratified in the society of the object that has been taken from us.—We hear of the death of a common acquaintance,—to which we reply, that we must all follow, and our feelings are untouched. A relation or a friend expires; but we looked up to our future interest in their benevolence while existing, and bounty at their departure. In these cases, profit softens our lamentations, and self-love secures us from that grief natural on disappointment. A parent however, a husband, or a wife, dies, with whom we were blessed with every earthly good, and lived in comfort and happiness. Here the affections are sharpened to a point, and the injury of self increases to distress, and mortify it. Self-love only can suffer here, and all our sorrow arises on our own accounts, and not on account of the dead, which it cannot restore. It is our loss, and not theirs, that awakens our anguish, and in the degree that they rendered themselves dear to us in existence, is our want of consolation on their defunction. But we are satisfied in conscience that we discharged our duty by them in all our conduct.—True.—Still self will find room for regret, proceeding from an interruption of its interest, which makes it wretched and miserable.

On the other hand, admitting there to be a more amiable selfishness, which forces us to lament the loss of parent, husband, wife, &c. from a pure disinterestedness of heart, except the interest it has in the happiness of either, we cannot help suffering on that loss, it being impossible for us to have an interest in the happiness of another, without being convinced that such other has a mutual interest in our own, which attracts it. Thus a son, or a husband, loses a parent, or a wife, whose parental or domestic virtue endeared either to him, and he is unhappy on his own account solely. During his own survivorship, he feels the want of their solacing endearments, their assistance, their caresses, and their society. He mourns over every thing that afforded them while living, the smallest pain; and Nature, disdaining precept, will have her way

way in measuring out, without controul, our grief in either case, accordingly as she has softened our feelings and affections, or they happen to be increased by the society of those we have lost, until time, under Providence, shall cure us by death or forgetfulness.

If any one maintain that philosophy is not humane nature, or that philosophers are not men, we may agree with Seneca, that virtue is sufficient to subdue the passions, and that we cannot, under its aid, be unhappy at any thing. But if, on the contrary, philosophy is that love of wisdom which only teaches us to conquer our affections, and not prevent them, it is enough to shew, that selfishness prevails in them all. In some it proceeds from an equal regard to the happiness of the deceased, as to our own; in others, to our own solely: and which of these is most amiable, the reader can be at no loss to determine.

It is true, that though the former degree of selfishness consists in wishing the dead alive for the sake of a mutual happiness, it is wishing no real good to the dead at all; who having passed "that bourne from whence no traveller returns," cease either to be within the power of fortune or disease; to be either happy or miserable; and by annihilation or otherwise, are unworthy our attention. Yet the mind is active, and will wanton in spite of us. We remember their good in existence, and convinced that death is the negation of life, we both suffer for that good we have lost, and the apprehended evil of pain we may undergo, as they have done before us, in the death of ourselves. From whence it is obvious, that whatever sayings or writings the ancients have left us to the contrary, man must either cease to be man, or suffer in his affections, either thro' a sordid or a virtuous selfishness, on the loss of parent, wife, relation, or friend, in proportion as his affections were raised by lucre or virtue; the latter of which, however great it may be, is never sufficient to resist and stifle sorrow in a feeling and affectionate heart.

Habit and prejudice, which govern the best of us, make us slaves in spite of reason and reflection, which oftener aggravate than subdue our pain, notwithstanding we are convinced that the operations of all nature are not to be averted, even by the DEITY, whose laws are fixt and immutable. To escape, therefore, the misery common to us on the loss of those who were in any way dear to us, is either to argue ourselves out of our senses, or be totally indifferent

to all the accidents of human life. On the contrary, to suffer under it, is either the effect of a disappointed gain,—the hope and expectation whereof was fordidly selfish; or of the loss of those we loved, and gratified our affections with, which is virtuously amiable.

As adversity is the common lot of us all, and as nothing we possess in the world can properly be called our own, it may be borne with advantage. “In the days of thy prosperity (says Ecclesiastes) rejoice; in the days of thy adversity, consider.” Thus adversity may be dispensed with, from that virtuous consideration only which sets us above it; and it seldom affects those who are conscious of deserving well, even by its bitterest shafts:—for of Fortune they may wisely say with Niobe,

*Major sum quam cui possit fortuna nocere.**

Grief, nevertheless, for our loss, disturbs the harmony of our minds. Left alone to run through all our thoughts, we are robbed of our peace, and a gloom is shed over all our prospects, to make us wretched. We cannot, however, prevent the accidents that befall us: submission, then, is proper; and to bear up against them, shews a much a stronger mind, than persons of deep feeling possess; for few of us can do less than sink under our load to which we submit. Burthened and overpowered, the trial is severe. Wisdom and precept shrink back affrighted, and leave the moral philosopher under the controul of passion and weakness, which are virtuous and inevitable, until reason and time prevail over recent affliction, and health fortify the mind against all its troubles.

24 MA 59

* Ovid. Met.

E L E G Y.

RECLINING on a tomb, MENANDER* stood,
Beneath a yew-tree's melancholy shade,
He mourn'd o'er ANNA's† grave, the kind, the good,
A better woman nature never made.

While gayer mortals court the gaudy scene,
And revel in delusive joys of night,
He gravely seeks this lonely spot serene,
To breathe in grief, and all his woes indite.

B

Here,

* The Author.

† Anna Neale, a maternal descendant of Sir Henry Peachy, Baronet, of Petworth, in Suffex, married Joseph, the fifth son of William, who was second cousin of Sir William Dawes, Baronet, Archbishop of York, and father of James Dawes, late of the island of Jamaica, Esq; by whom she had issue many children, and left an only son, (the author of this Elegy) and an only daughter.

Here then he stops, and sighing takes his stand,
 While moon and stars now o'er him faintly roll;
 Where night-owls screech, and ghosts with pallid hand
 Can only soothe his agitated soul.

For, oh! he now has gone thro' all his thought,
 And with it wreck'd his palpitating heart;
 To joy he turn'd, and consolation sought,
 Yet pining grief did all his looks impart.

Ah where (cry'd he) shall I my solace find?
 Where is that hand that could my soul revive?
 Where all to me that in the world was kind,
 Or all below that made me wish to live?

Where are those joys that from the heart did flow,
 And cheer'd a mother in a son's repose?
 That haply warm'd them with a mutual glow,
 And did their transports cheerfully disclose.

Where is the bliss in ev'ry state I found? —
 'Tis vanish'd all, and all my joys are fled;
 The source is lost, and all is drear around:—
 My Mother lies among the mighty dead!

No

No more can I rejoice with her alone,
 Nor on her bosom lean an aching head ;
 No more display the fondness of a son,
 Except in tears to bathe her clay-cold bed.

The mournful muse will all her virtues sing,
 While hence from me she's now for ever gone ; —
 Lost to myself, and all that joy can bring,
 I'll weep, like Niobe,* myself to stone.

Here, like the moping bird of night, I dwell,
 And o'er my sorrow here in silence brood ;
 Here weeping, all my bitter sadness tell,
 And draw from thence, alas! my loathsome food.

Oft, like Cassandra,† did she long foretell
 The day of grief to me her death would prove ;
 For me she felt the aching heart I feel,
 For me she pray'd to all the gods above.§

Attend,

* Niobe was wife of Amphion, King of Thebes. She slighted the goddess Latona, and set herself above her, for which Apollo and Diana, the children of that goddess, slew Niobe's sons and daughters, and lastly her father. This resentment stupified her with grief, 'till at length she was turned into a stone, which from thence sheds tears to this day.—*Ovid, Met.*

† A prophetess.

§ Her constant prayer was for the welfare and happiness of her son, when she should be no more.

Attend, ye fons, and let reflection show,
 How dear ye all to tender parents are,
 How great to them the debt of love ye owe,
 Then be unfilial wretches, if ye dare.

But who can hear me make my grievous plaint,
 And not commend the suff'rings of my heart?
 Who see me under all my anguish faint,
 Unmindful of my miserable part?

Ah! did she know the pain I now endure,
 What grief would torture her maternal soul!
 Yet, yet 'tis well she rests in peace secure,
 While I her virtues here on earth extol.

Still void of solace, or a mind at ease,
 All, all to me is wretchedness and pain;
 No joys have I, nor can I taste of peace,
 Until my corse is by my mother's lain.

Like Juno's priestess, here then let me pray,
 Like her for Cleobis and Biton* weep;
 Let me here hope before the rising day,
 That I may rest in everlasting sleep.

When

* Cleobis and Biton drew their mother's chariot, who was priestess to Juno, to the temple, in the absence of those whose duty it was to have done it; which
 so

For oft as here my ANNA's name I view,
 Or her dear image force my heaving sighs,
 I, o'er her tomb shall here my grief renew,
 And pierce e'en heaven with my plaintive cries.

Depriv'd of all that was contenting here,
 What friend can soften my convulsive breast?
 Can friend call back my ANNA by a tear,
 And thence restore me to my wonted rest?

Oh, no! oh, no! and reason feebly tells
 That all my tears are shed for her in vain;
 That tho' my sorrow all my bosom swells,
 Alone can reason lull my frantic pain.

Yet reason's weak when nature thus prevails,
 And yields new anguish to the aching heart;
 In all its aid here ev'ry effort fails,
 And nature rules in spite of reason's art.

C

When

so charmed her, that in return for this instance of filial duty, she petitioned her goddesses to bestow on them the greatest gift that could be given to men; whereupon they both were cast into a deep sleep, from whence they never more awakened.

When from his sad'ned and his wat'ry eyne
 The tears of sick'ning grief no more could flow,
 He smooth'd his visage with a look serene,
 And soft'ned thus his heart-corroding woe.

Ah ANNA, dear parent adieu !
 Thy virtues I'll sing on the plains ;
 Let parents take pattern by you,
 And win the true love of the swains.

I'll study to blazon your fame ;—
 The fair to the shepherds untrue,
 Your precepts would often reclaim,
 And ev'ry endearment renew.

No pleasure could equal your love ;
 What poet your sweetness can tell ?
 You were humble and true as the dove
 That nurtur'd her brood in the dell.

Your beauty, fure, none could deny,
 Your brows by the graces were drest ;
 The tear that oft bright'ned your eye,
 Spoke tendernefs reign'd in your breast.

Your

Your sympathy ravish'd my heart ;
How many have envy'd my blifs !
How hard with such treasure to part,
What woe can be equal to this ?

How oft on your bosom I've prest !
(A bosom abounding with love)
How oft by your hand have been blest,
Made happy as those now above.

All vice you detested in truth,
All virtue you practis'd in deed ;
Good natur'd and charming in youth,
In age none your goodness exceed.

Beneficent, kind, and humane,
Your charity succour'd the poor ;
The sick feel your loss, and the sane,*
Who came to your neighbourly door.

Your temper was soft and resign'd,
Unruffled by passion or pride ;
Your life was by wisdom refin'd —
And happy was I by your side.

Your

* She cured a multitude of persons in her life-time of the ague, the gravel, and the hemorrhoides, *gratis*.

Your mind was exalted and clear,
 'Twas pleasing to hear you converse ;
 You made yourself constantly dear,
 None like you could ever rehearse.†

Your conduct was always discreet,
 No calumny fell from your tongue ;
 Your manners were gentle and sweet,
 Alike to the old and the young.

As wife, you was truly sincere,
 As mother, most tender and kind ;
 As friend, you was ne'er in arrear,—
 None like you is left us behind.

Your soul was susceptibly fine,
 Anxiety made it a prey ;*
 Of virtue 'twas ever a mine,
 And this all who knew you will say.†

O why

† Her memory was unusually great.

* It is suspected that her fondness for her children, whom she most tenderly loved and brought up, and her anxiety for their welfare, occasioned the chronic disorder that ended in her death ; especially as her constitution was very delicate.

† She was truly beloved by all who knew her ; and, what is remarkable in her character, her evenness of temper obtained her the admiration of every body

O why did you take her, Great Pow'r,
 From him who ador'd her so dear?†
 Ah! her who made chearful the hour,
 Throughout the whole time of the year!

'Twas because you regarded her worth,
 And pity'd the pains she endur'd;
 'Cause she was too good for the earth,
 In death you her misery cur'd.

Then teach me no more to lament
 Her loss, while behind her I live;
 But aid me my woes to relent,
 Nor longer continue to grieve.

D

For,

body. She was never out of humour in her life, and her constant employment was in acts of charity, bounty, and benevolence.

† Her son, from his childhood to maturity, was ever so fond of her, that in the course of his life scarce a day passed without his seeing her; and he sacrificed all worldly pursuits to his affection for her, with whom he lived for several years, 'till her death, which happened, to his unspeakable anguish, in his presence, after a close attendance upon her day and night, for near seven months, the whole time of her last illness.

For, oh! I in conscience can say
No son was more dutiful known;
My loss yet my spirits dismay.
And makes me myself to bemoan.

No more I shall talk by her side,
No more to her bounty repair,
No more on her goodness abide,
Nor find all my happiness there.

No more I of joys shall partake,
Ah ANNA! for ever adieu!
My pipe by the willows I'd break,
If 'twere not devoted to you.

You'd smile when my pleasure was known,
You'd sigh when I told you my fears;
Then can I do less than bemoan,
And sprinkle your grave with my tears?

Without her, ah! what can delight?

Her equal no where shall I find;
Altho' she's no more in my sight,
She for ever will live in my mind.

Thus

Thus sung the feeling and the mournful Son,
 With heart half-broken, and with sorrow torn,
 His hands entwin'd, he look'd to God alone,
 And sighing left his mother's tomb forlorn.

His guardian genius, pitying his sighs,
 Divinely ask'd for whom he made his moan ;
 The dearest parent, and a friend, he cries,
 A loss to him, ah, now for ever gone.

Inform me then, the heav'nly genius said,
 Art thou in conscience with thy duty proud ?
 Yes, yes, he answer'd, with an humble head,
 And this his conscience ever speaks aloud.

'Tis well, 'tis well ; and here no longer sigh,
 Nor o'er thy common lot here longer brood ;
 For as thou soon thyself must also die,
 Let her example be thy future good.

But hark, and listen to her wisdom true,
 See there her form in vision 'fore thee stand ;
 Hark, how she marks the road thou must pursue,
 To make thee happy in a christian land.

My

My son, my son, (the parent here then said)

For thee in pity I forego the skies;
For thee, my son, who art with sorrow fed,
I come once more to dry thy wat'ry eyes.

In death thy woes affect my tender breast,
And thund'ring shakes my dark and vaulted grave;
Here then I come to lull thy pangs to rest,
And of thy anguish thee henceforth bereave.

Away vain tears, thy sighs and plaints suppress,
Nor further mourn my worldly loss to thee;
For trust, the time, is near that thee will bless,
And hither waft thy spirit unto me.

Mean time thy guardian here I'm plac'd by heav'n,
While on thy bed thy weary'd limbs repose;
To me, ah me! thy constant care is giv'n,
'Thy slumbers waiting, I thy eye-lids close.

I, angel-like, direct thy earthly ways,
Around unseen I flit, and thee embrace:—
But now farewell! soon end thy mortal days,
The time is near when all thy woes will cease.

Roll on my days, MENANDER now reply'd,
 Old Time, for me extend thy fleeting wing;
 Soon let me rest, ah! near my mother's side,
 Since ANNA calls, to her I long to spring.

T H E E P I T A P H.

Peace to her soul! the fatal hour is o'er
 When Death approach'd, and threw his mortal dart—
 Here, all remains of what was good, and more,
 All that in life contain'd a godlike heart.

Now death will spread wide ope the gate of fame,
 Unenvy'd lye the ashes of the just;
 And truth will witness, and aloud proclaim,
 Her living worth, without a story'd bust.

The solemn thought that leads unto these lines,
 Confirms the certainty of death to all;
 E'en kings and princes are but mortal shrines,
 And must in time obey its tyrant call.

E

Here

(14)

Here then I cease her merits to disclose,
Or shed my tears here o'er her corps abode,
Since here it lies in cold and dread repose,
And her pure soul now rests with Nature's God.

M. D.

24 MA 59

F I N I S.

